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Discreet Diner | Trattoria Spaghetto

Feb 19, 2006

It was quite by chance that this Discreet Diner and a companion wandered into the Trattoria Spaghetto in Voorhees on a cold Saturday night last month. The place, which seats only about 60, was packed. Not having reservations, we were told the wait would be about 20 minutes.

We only needed seconds to mull it over. The wonderful smells of oregano, garlic and tomatoes made us even hungrier than we were and the environment was very cozy and warm. So we waited.

We were glad we did.

Located in an unexceptional shopping center across from the Main Street complex, the restaurant, in its current incarnation, is barely a year old. At least two other ethnic (and non-Italian) restaurants were there before.

Owner Giovanni Amaru does the cooking, using home-style techniques he says he learned from his grandmother and mother.

Our choices that night were penne a la vodka (\$14.95), which proved to be a delicious entree featuring quite tender pasta in a sauce that was neither too creamy nor too dominated by the liquor, and chicken Parmesan (\$15.95) that was very tender, not too heavily breaded and came accompanied by well-cooked angel-hair pasta.

We started out by passing on the salads that came with the meals, opting instead on this frigid night for bowls of hot and tangy pasta fazul, (\$4.25) loaded with cannelloni beans in a hearty broth.

Water and very fresh bread were brought quickly to our table, but we had to ask our young server more than once for butter.

For those used to dining in chain restaurants, the wait for the main course may seem a bit long. That's because Amaru wants his food to taste like you are eating in someone's kitchen. It is cooked meticulously.

The food was worth the time spent waiting. We each ate part of both ample meals. There was enough left for this diner to make a meal the next night for himself, this time accompanied by a glass of wine. The restaurant does not have a liquor license, and since we had not planned on dining there, we had not brought wine with us.

We were so full from the entrees that we couldn't even look at the desserts, which feature an assortment of Italian pastries.

The only complaint we had was that a curtain served as the inside door. That allowed a draft in the room every time the outer door opened. Amaru said a door has since replaced the curtain.

Trattoria Spaghetto is one of those cozy places that prides itself on hands-on ownership and cooking the old-fashioned way. And it seems to work. Everyone in the full house the night we visited seemed to be enjoying their meals.

Amaru shops for the food daily. He previously owned restaurants in North Jersey and Long Island and moved to the area a few years ago. Then he looked for the right spot.

It looks like he found it.

Discreet Diner | Trattoria Spaghetto

8011 Centennial Blvd., Voorhees

Phone: 856-489-1212

Hours: Tue-Fri, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.; Sat & Sun, 4 to 10 p.m.; closed Mon

Children's menu: Yes

Smoking: No

Handicapped accessible: Yes

Parking: Yes

Takeout: Yes